

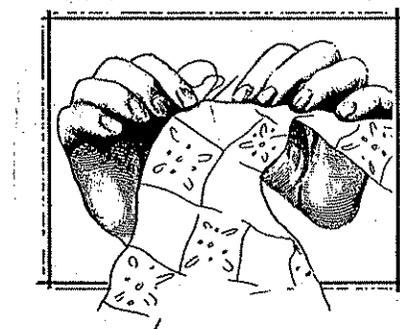
LESSON 15

TOPIC

Sewing a Quilt Block

TIME

1 - 2 hours



MATERIALS FROM THE TRUNK

How to Make a Quilt
Template

*Note that the sewing box in this trunk is for instructional purposes only and is **not** adequate or usable in this exercise.

OTHER MATERIALS

Templates (copied on cardboard from the template in the trunk)

Fabric (a variety)

Pencils

Rulers

Fabric Scissors

Sewing Thread

Needles (size 6 or 7 for hand sewing)

Pins

Iron and ironing board

Fast markers for signing names on fabric (Flair permanent markers or Sharpie laundry marking pens are good.)

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to demonstrate the process of making a quilt in sequence.
2. Students will understand the use of a template.
3. Students will gain beginning competence in sewing.
4. Students will exercise aesthetic judgments in organizing a quilt block.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Patchwork traditionally has served as a method to teach children hand sewing skills. Nineteenth-century girls were taught to seam blocks together at the ages of five or six. Many women born before the Civil War discuss in their memoirs how they learned to sew nine-patch quilts at the same time they learned their ABC's. Since hand stitching clothing and household linens were an important part of women's work, sewing was a primary part of the female curriculum. After the sewing machine came into American homes soon after the Civil War, children continued to learn to sew through patchwork but more often at ten or twelve years of age rather than as young children.

Informed as we are today about children's attention spans, it is hard to believe that small children in the past stitched bed-sized quilts. Some feel that today's children have shorter attention spans than pre-television youngsters, but a careful reading of nineteenth-century memoirs indicates that many children were as resistant to a lengthy and repetitive project as today's young seamstresses would be. To overcome the child's aversion to sitting still and doing the same task over and over, parents in the past broke the task into daily "stints" of patchwork followed by a reward. Instructions like: "When you finish today's stint, you may go play," are just as effective today. In the past, a daily stint was either a specific time period (fifteen minutes or a half hour) or a specific task (completing one block). Students who show an interest in sewing might want to make a plan with a parent or teacher for a similar daily or weekly stint of sewing, with a goal of completing a doll quilt, a wall hanging, or even a bed-sized quilt over a longer period time.

PREPARATION

For the teacher's information, quilt blocks are included in this manual. These blocks have been left unfinished so that a teacher unfamiliar with quilting can look at the back of the blocks and see how they are constructed. One block in the manual is stitched by hand and the other is machine stitched. This lesson is based on the method of hand sewing.

If you are unfamiliar with the basic steps of quilting, you might want to read *Small Folk Quilters* by Ingrid Rogler which is included in this manual.

There are many different ways to sew patchwork. The hand sewing method we advise requires a template, without a fourth of an inch seam allowance on it. Initially, the students trace the template which will be the sewing line. The students should measure and mark a fourth of an inch from the sewing line (on all four sides). This becomes the cutting line. As they become more skillful at estimating a fourth of an inch seam allowance, the penciled cutting line can be eliminated.

We have found that beginning with a double thread is easier than a single thread since a knotted double thread does not fall out of the needle's eye. The knot at the end of a double thread is

easier to tie than the knot on a single thread. As the students learn to sew, you may want to encourage them to move to a single thread and teach them to take two back stitches at the end of each line of sewing rather than tying a knot at the end of the sewing line.

We used "quilting thread" for the hand sewing in our field test. It is stiff and does not knot as easily as sewing thread. However, "quilting thread" leaves larger holes in the fabric. Avoid one hundred percent polyester thread as it tangles easily in hand sewing. Cotton wrapped thread (Dual-Duty is one brand) works well for sewing.

Certainly, fourth to sixth grade students can learn to hand sew if they receive a little individualized instruction and feedback. We have field tested our sewing methods with a class of fifth and sixth graders who had a wide range of fine motor skills. We found a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:5 or 1:6 adequate, so we would advise teachers to plan on such a ratio. Ask three or four parents to assist in conducting the activity with an entire class, or use the activity in teacher-led small groups while the rest of the class works independently on another project.

Some students have a hard time with pinning, needle threading, knots, etc. To give them a sense of accomplishment, the adult may want to do these steps at first and let the students handle easier steps such as marking fabric, taking stitches, and cutting the thread. The teacher should gradually let the students take over more of the steps until they are doing everything.

The goal in hand sewing is to produce a straight, even line of stitches exactly atop the pencil line. Beginners should aim for about six stitches to an inch (measured on the top of the fabric). It is easiest to first encourage stitching on the pencil line. When that is accomplished, focus on a straight line of stitches, next require even stitches, and lastly encourage the students to reduce the size of their stitches. In the most efficient running stitch, students should gather two or three stitches on their needles before pulling the thread through the fabric. Less efficient is "stabbing" up and down one stitch at a time.

Give the students positive feedback for their stitching. Praise them for staying on the line, making small stitches, etc. On occasion it may be necessary to have a student rip out stitches that are unacceptable and sew the seam with more supervision. Be judicious about asking students who need success to rip out their stitches. An alternative at first is to praise their work and reinforce their poor seams with your own stitching. After the students experience some initial success, you can work together on improving their stitches. On the other hand, do not accept sloppy sewing as a final goal. Most students can sew a fine seam if they are well trained.

Ingrid Rogler's book, *Small Folks Quilters*, can serve as instruction for students who want to go beyond the blocks described in this lesson.

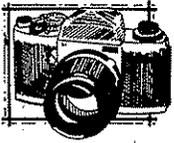
VOCABULARY

Backstitch A stitch made by going back over the stitch just made. When hand

	stitching, a backstitch is done after every fourth or fifth stitch to make the seam stronger.
Batting	A layer of soft, fluffy filler used between the top and the backing of a quilt. The batting provides warmth.
Binding	The fabric used to finish the edge of a quilt.
Block	The basic unit of a quilt top. Blocks, often pieced squares, are stitched together to form the quilt top's design.
Fabric	Cloth. Cotton, wool, silk, polyester are four types of fabric used in quilting.
Knot	A knot is tied into the end of a sewing thread to keep the thread from coming loose.
Needle	A small, slender tool with a hole for thread at one end and a sharp point at the other. Used for sewing.
Patchwork	The result of sewing together small pieces or patches of fabric. The quilt top is often referred to as patchwork.
Pattern	The quilt top design.
Piecing	To sew together pieces of fabric to form a quilt top.
Pin	A small thin piece of wire with one flat or large end and one sharp, pointed end. A pin is used for holding quilt pieces together prior to sewing.
Quilt Top	The first or top layer of the quilt.
Quilting	The process of stitching through three layers (top, batting, and back) of a quilt to hold them together.
Running Stitch	A small even stitch run in and out through cloth.
Seam	A line of stitching that joins two pieces of fabric.
Seam Allowance	The material between the sewing line and the edge of the fabric.
Spool	A small wooden or plastic cylinder used to hold thread.

Template	A piece of stiff cardboard or plastic used as a pattern guide for cutting fabric.
Thread	A strong fiber used for sewing. Cotton thread has been used for centuries for piecing and quilting.

ACTIVITIES



1) Share with the students the *how to make a quilt* photographs. These photographs explain the necessary steps. After the process of making a quilt has been discussed, mix up the photographs and see if the students can place them back in sequence. The answers are on the backs of the photographs.

2) Review the vocabulary since the student will be following instructions based on these terms. (If you have never made a quilt block before, you might want to review "Making a Friendship Block" in the back of the manual before proceeding.)

3) Show the students the *template*. Ask them what they think it is and how it could be used in quilting.

4) Allow each student to pick out his/her own fabric. Remember that aesthetics is based on personal taste and there are no right or wrong choices. However, if each student is to autograph his/her block, it is good to have at least one light-colored solid fabric in the block so that the signature shows up. Each student will need a total of an eighth to a fourth of a yard of fabric. It is not necessary to precut all the fabric into this size if there are many fabrics to choose from. It also works to allow the students to cut what they need and return the leftover fabric to the pile for another student's use. You can use cotton or cotton/blend fabrics but avoid anything with more than sixty percent polyester as polyester stretches. Do not use loose weaves or sheer fabrics as the edges will fray.

5) Have the students turn the fabric wrong side up. Place the template on the wrong side of the fabric (make sure there is at least a fourth inch of fabric remaining on all sides of the template). Using a pencil, draw around the template.

6) Using a ruler, have the students measure a fourth of an inch from the pencil lines (drawn from the template). Mark the fourth of an inch cutting lines. Cut the fabric on these second lines.

7) For one block, the students will need to cut three pieces. If the student is to autograph the block, it is helpful if one piece is a light-colored solid.

8) Place two pieces of fabric together with their right sides together (the wrong side of the fabric will be on the outside). Pin along the pencil lines on the long side.

9) The student needs to thread a needle and tie a knot at the end of the thread. Using the needle and thread, the student should stitch along the pencil line using a running stitch with an occasional backstitch. A knot should be tied at the end of the seam and the thread cut off.

10) Using the iron, the student should press the seam (on the back) to one side. In quiltmaking, seams are **not** pressed "open" as done when sewing clothes.

11) The third piece of fabric should be sewn onto the other two the same way. When all three pieces are sewn together lengthwise, the block is complete. If so desired, the student can sign his/her name on one of the pieces.

12) As a summary of what the students have learned about sewing and as a guide for their parents who might want to continue to supervise sewing at home, the students will write down the steps to making a quilt block.



a) Each student might write his/her own list. It can be a group activity, however, in which the students recall the steps together as the teacher writes them on the board. Students could then copy the instructions. A third option is to have the group produce a single set of instructions and photocopy it so each student can take a copy home. A set of detailed instructions "Making a Friendship Block" are included in the manual which can be photocopied and sent home with the students.

b) Students should use their own words to describe the process. The important steps should include:

1. Making a template
2. Marking around the template
3. Cutting the fabric about a fourth of an inch outside the pencil lines
4. Pinning two pieces together with right sides together
5. Pinning along the pencil lines
6. Threading a needle
7. Tying a knot in the thread
8. Stitching along the pencil line by using a running stitch with an occasional back stitch
9. Cutting the thread and tying a knot at the end
10. Pressing the seam to one side

ASSESSMENT

Levels of Achievement

For Objective 1

- a) Students identify one or two parts of the sequence correctly.
- b) Students identify most of the sequence correctly.
- c) Students identify all of the sequence correctly.

For Objective 2

- a) Students demonstrate a general understanding of the use of a template.
- b) Students demonstrate a full understanding of the use of a template.

For Objective 3

- a) Students are able to sew with some help.
- b) Students are able to sew without help.

For Objective 4

There are no right or wrong choices here. However, students should remember to choose at least one light-colored fabric so that the signature shows up.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1) FINISHING THE BLOCKS:

The blocks can individually be finished by adding batting, a backing, and binding. To complete the block, a fabric backing and a piece of batting the same size as the completed block must be cut. To put the block together, place the backing down first with the wrong side facing up. Next put down the batting. On top, place the quilt block with the right side up. Make sure that all layers line up evenly (or the back and the batting can be cut slightly larger and trimmed once the block is tied). Pin the block together at various points to hold the three layers together. The easiest way to complete the block is to tie it like a comforter. Use embroidery thread in a large-eyed needle to tie several knots through all three layers of the fabric. To tie the knot, take the needle down through the top coming out the back, then take the needle up (close to the first stitch, but not through the same hole) so that it comes out on top. Tie the two ends of the thread together twice to form a knot. Cut the thread so that a fourth to a half of an inch threads are left on the quilt top. Space the knots out evenly over the entire block (the number of knots is a matter of personal taste, however, there must be enough knots to hold the three layers together). Once all the knots are in place, remove the pins. It is now time to bind the quilt block. The easiest way to do this is to use precut binding tape that is found in fabric stores. Cut four strips of binding, two the exact size of two opposite sides of the block and two half inch longer than the other two sides (measure each side carefully because quilt blocks do not

always come out evenly). Sew each piece of binding to the front of the block by placing the right sides together and sewing a fourth of an inch seam. Press back the binding and fold it so the edge reaches the back of the block. Sew, using an applique stitch, the binding to the backing. The final step is to miter the corners. For instructions on how to bind, see pages 56-57 of *Small Folk Quilters* (in the manual).

2) MAKE A CLASS FRIENDSHIP QUILT:

The class can assemble all of the blocks together to create a class quilt. Additional materials that are needed include fabric for the backing of the quilt and batting. Strips of fabric or precut binding tape will be needed to bind the quilt. If the quilt is to be tied like a comforter, then embroidery thread or yarn will be needed. Quilts can be square or rectangular. The quilt can be as small as three blocks by three blocks for a wall hanging. A full-sized bed quilt would be nine blocks by nine blocks (a total of eighty-one blocks set side by side) with a four inch border on four sides, resulting in a finished quilt of eighty-nine inches square. If you end up with an odd number of blocks, you can make extra ones and write the school's name or the date on them. Ask the principal, the nurse, and the secretary to sign blocks to fill out the quilt. In our field test, we asked each child to make two blocks. They chose the best one for the class quilt and took the other one home. Our five block by six block quilt made a good wall hanging for the entrance hall by the school's front door. To complete the quilt, follow the above directions. To complete the block only, apply the same directions -- the same principle works. You may also want to get help to complete the quilt.

WHERE TO GET HELP

You may be a quiltmaker and know exactly how you are going to teach the children to sew and finish a quilt. On the other hand, you may know very little about sewing and/or quilting. There are many quiltmakers who would like to help you. The first resource might be parents. Circulate a letter asking for assistance on the days you are teaching sewing and see if you can get a volunteer or two who will assemble the blocks the children make into a finished quilt top. Ask if anyone wants to volunteer to quilt or tie the quilt and help with binding the edges. Many churches have Ladies Aid Societies that for years have been finishing quilts to raise funds. You may want to pay them to quilt your quilt (expect to pay \$100 or more), or you might ask them to come to the classroom as consultants. Another valuable resource are the quilt guilds in Kansas. If you have a guild in your community, its members may agree to give you advice, help out in the classroom, send demonstrators, donate fabric, and, if you catch someone on a good day, you may find a quiltmaker who will finish your classroom quilt. One way to locate quiltmakers in your community is to ask the county home economist.